

Additional Resources

Caregiving is a hard job, and it can take its toll on even the strongest person. Fortunately, resources are available to lend you emotional support and help you feel connected to others. The following are just a few of the resources available to you:

- Your local **Area Agency on Aging** has services which may be beneficial to you. See the bottom of the back panel of this brochure for contact information.
- The **Alzheimer's Association** has local chapters throughout Virginia. To find the one in your area, contact the national office:

Alzheimer's Association

919 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 1100
Chicago, IL 60611-1676
Toll-Free: (800) 272-3900
Phone: (312) 335-8700
Fax: (312) 335-1110
E-mail: info@alz.org
Web Site: www.alz.org

- **National Family Caregivers Association**
10400 Connecticut Avenue, #500
Kensington, MD 20895-3944
Phone: 1-800-896-3650
Fax: (301) 942-2302
E-mail: info@nfcacares.org
Web Site: www.nfcacares.org

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Virginia Department for the Aging

1600 Forest Avenue, Suite 102
Richmond, VA 23229

Toll-Free: 1-800-552-3402

(Nationwide Voice/TTY)

Richmond: (804) 662-9333

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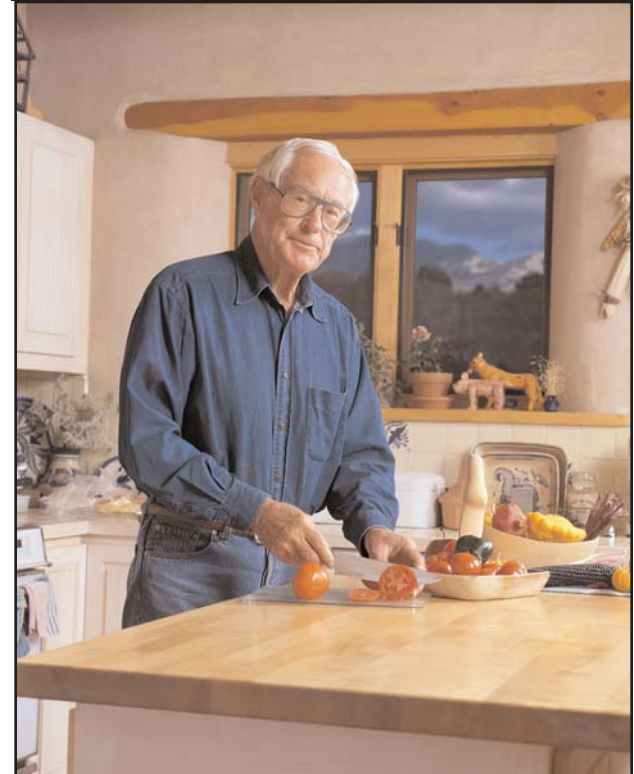
E-mail: aging@vdh.state.va.us

Web Site: www.aging.state.va.us



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**Sometimes we get
so busy caring
for others...**



**That we forget
to take care
of ourselves.**

Who is taking care of you?

Mention the word “caregiver”, and the image most people have is that of a woman - a wife, daughter, or mother. However, the number of men filling the role of caregiver is increasing.

Men are raised differently than women, so their reaction to the demands of caregiving may differ. Men are often taught to submerge their needs for emotional support, and to be silent about their problems. To avoid appearing “weak”, they may not seek support from others. For some of these men, the stress of caregiving may lead to physical or emotional exhaustion, and, in some instances, to abuse of the person in their care. To keep this from happening, it is important to help these men find the assistance they need.

Who Do You Lean On?

If you are a male and a primary caregiver for another person, taking care of yourself and your needs is important. Think of it as the performance of regular maintenance on your car - it prevents more serious problems down the road. In a similar way, there are things you can do to help nurture yourself. Taking care of yourself can help you cope with stress and improve your well-being, which will make you a better, more effective caretaker.

Stay Healthy

- **Get enough rest.** If you are awakened during the night take naps and rest breaks the next day.

- **Take a break.** Plan breaks for yourself each day by asking others to stay with the care recipient for a few hours. Also, try to plan extended breaks, like vacations or long weekends.
- **Exercise and eat right.** Regular exercise will help keep you in shape and help you cope with stress. A nutritious, well-balanced diet can give you more energy while helping you stay healthy.
- **Stay well.** Make time to visit your doctor or clinic for regular checkups. If you do get sick, make sure that you receive medical care and allow yourself time to recuperate fully.
- **Watch for signs of depression.** Feeling apathetic, hopeless or extremely sad? Having trouble concentrating, or having persistent thoughts about death? If so, see a doctor right away, as they are all signs of depression. Fortunately, depression is a physical illness that can be treated successfully.

Stay Emotionally Healthy

- **Don’t judge.** Emotions are often conflicting and confusing - you may feel anger, guilt, impatience, helplessness, love, and dislike all at the same time. Recognize that you have conflicting emotions, and that they are not “bad”, nor are you “wrong” for having them.

- **Talk about it.** Isolation increases stress, so try to call one or more of your friends each day. Maintaining social contact will help you focus on something other than your immediate surroundings, and can help you keep your emotional balance.
- **Learn to cope.** Develop methods of coping to help you ease tension, frustration, sadness, or irritation. Chopping wood, cleaning or taking a brisk walk are examples of activities that can help lift your mood when you are feeling frustrated or sad.

Find Support For Yourself

- **Ask for help.** Make a list of tasks you need help with and ask relatives, neighbors and friends to assist you. People from faith-based groups, clubs or other organizations can also be asked to help with the following:
 - Shopping for groceries;
 - Cooking, cleaning or laundry;
 - Yard work or minor household repairs;
 - Transportation; or
 - Researching services that are available in your area by using the telephone or the Internet.
- **Use community resources.** In some areas, there may be a volunteer phone program you can call for reassurance. There may also be a caregiver support group you can join.